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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA  
MISSOULA DIVISION

<p>WESTERN WATERSHEDS PROJECT, et al.,</p> <p>Plaintiffs,</p> <p>v.</p> <p>SALAZAR, et al.,</p> <p>Defendants.</p>	<p>CV-09-159-M-CCL</p> <p>DECLARATION OF ROSALIE LITTLE THUNDER</p>
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## **DECLARATION OF ROSALIE LITTLE THUNDER**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. Sec. 1746, I, Rosalie Little Thunder, hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct:

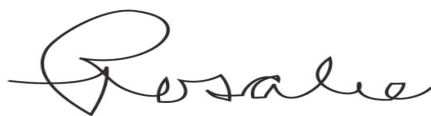
1. My name is Rosalie Little Thunder. I am a member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate; Burnt Thigh Band, of the Little Thunder Tiospaye and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. I reside in the Black Hills Treaty Territory in Rapid City, South Dakota.
2. This declaration addresses my deep interest in and connection to bison, and the impacts that National Park Service and US Forest Service slaughter has on that connection.
3. In the winter of 1996-97, Sidney Keith, an elder who was my mentor, had heard that tribal people were being invited to Yellowstone National Park to get buffalo carcasses. He felt that something was terribly wrong with this picture and asked that I go there to see what was happening.
4. Like so many Lakota elders, Sidney knew the historical accounts of our relationship with the Tatanka Oyate and our continuing responsibilities to this relative. Throughout his life, Sidney maintained and taught the traditional beliefs and ceremonial practices that centered around tatanka.
5. Even prior to Sidney's influence, from childhood, I heard our origin stories; how the Lakota evolved from a common origin with the buffalo. The buffalo surfaced from the underground at Wind Care, adapting and existing upon Unci Maka for centuries. We cautiously came forth out of Wind Cave, in human form, at the urging of our brother who offered an assurance of survival. The tatanka not only gave of themselves to provide food and shelter, but a way of being.
6. Tatanka, having the earlier experience of co-existing with all other beings and having learned to be a significant contributing factor to the ecosystem, was a good teacher to the frail human. The massive herds migrated across the plains, never lingering in one area long enough to deplete the generosity of Unci Maka or to cause damage to the habitat of other species. Their sharp hooves loosened and aerated the soil. They germinated plant seeds through their systems and also carried it far and wide in their shaggy coats and contributed to the diversity of the rooted beings. The vibration of their massive movements stimulated underground water levels and generated the energy to draw the thunderclouds to nourish the Earth. Tatanka are one of the

species held sacred by Indigenous Peoples for their ability to support so many other species. to truly manage the Earth.

7. We weaker (*unsika*) Lakota learned to model our social order on that of the wiser and more disciplined *tatanka*. A sophisticated matriarchal system emerged to manage the collective energy.
8. Then catastrophic change came to the Buffalo Nation, to the natural world and natural law. In order to conquer the elusive Lakota people by cutting off their food source, the U.S. Army slaughtered millions of buffaloes. By systematically eliminating a keystone species, the entire ecosystem was put in great peril. The slaughter continues in Yellowstone now, where a remnant herd survived the earlier massacre. The killing is for different reasons that are likewise irresponsible.
9. Since I witnessed the 1996-97 slaughter, I have continued to be involved in the on-going effort to stop the slaughter. Mike Mease and I collaborated and founded Buffalo Nations, whose mission was simply to protect the Yellowstone buffalo herd. Two strategies evolved and therefore, two projects also evolved. The immediate threats to the herd, demanding immediate action was undertaken by Buffalo Field Campaign. The second strategy was coordinate cultural approaches and to seek tribal involvement. Buffalo Nations continued to function by its Lakota name, *Tatanka Oyate*.
10. In 1999, delegates from an estimated 20 tribes joined a spiritual journey from the Black Hills of South Dakota to Yellowstone National Park, to bring prayers and offerings to the buffalo.
11. Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe continues to perform ceremonies to release the spirits of the slain buffalo and in gratitude to the volunteers of Buffalo Field Campaign and the local neighborhoods.
12. When I reported all the scientific, political, and legal complications facing the *tatanka* herd in Yellowstone, Sidney Keith commented that, in spite of all these challenges, we can never forget our reciprocal responsibility to them and we must also hold on to the long range prophecies.
13. The tribal peoples' interest in the well being of the Yellowstone buffalo herd is not driven by greed nor by profit. Our concern arises from the continuous, collective relationship with a sacred species. The buffalo are an integral part of our culture, but a deeper concern is for the Earth in the absence of its caretaker.

14. By the standards of American culture, the tatanka is regarded as a mere commodity. In the Yellowstone area, it is regarded as an inconvenience to the cattle industry, but they are the last of the great ancestors, with their genetic integrity uncompromised and instinctive wisdom intact.
15. It is unfortunate that we must seek remedies from those that may not have a similar cultural foundation or the wisdom of their ancestors, who may not have the necessary disciplines to guide their thinking or behaviors, but on whom rests the fate of the Yellowstone buffalo herd.
16. We seek to hold accountable those that are entrusted stewards of the land and the true and rightful inhabitants. Lack of stringent oversight can sometimes distort the necessary standards of accountability. I believe that we must bring about this scrutiny to protect the rights of a sacred species. And so, as tribal people, our challenge is to develop further strategies to preserve the core of our culture, that viable populations of wild buffalo are maintained.
17. As he prepared for his journey to the Spirit World, my elder Sidney Keith sought my continuing commitment to Tatanka. It is not just my sole commitment, but for all of us, as Tatanka Oyate. I only need to remind people of something they have not forgotten. As we move forward with the organizing of a nation-to-nation consultation, the existing stewardship and those accountability standards need to be a part of that discussion as thus far, all remedies to the perceived problems have resulted in the execution of the buffalo herd.
18. Throughout the buffalo culture tribes, there is a common understanding that when the last wild buffalo perishes, so too will the tribal cultures.
19. We must strive to be good ancestors.

Executed this 30<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2010

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosalie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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Rosalie Little Thunder

